

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A vacuum pumping arrangement comprising:
a turbomolecular pumping mechanism having a rotor, wherein the rotor comprises rotor blades; and
a molecular drag pumping mechanism connected in series with the turbomolecular pumping mechanism, wherein a rotor of the molecular drag pumping mechanism being is supported by the rotor blades of the turbomolecular pumping mechanism.
2. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 1, wherein the rotor blades are provided with an annular ring to which ~~said~~ the rotor of the molecular drag pumping mechanism is fixed.
3. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 2, wherein the turbomolecular pumping mechanism has a plurality of stages and the rotor blades of at least the last stage are provided with ~~said~~ the annular ring.
4. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ 1, wherein the rotor of the molecular drag pumping mechanism is supported approximately half way along the radial length of the rotor blades of the turbomolecular pumping mechanism.
5. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 1, wherein the molecular drag pumping mechanism has a plurality of rotors supported by ~~said~~ the rotor blades of ~~said~~ the turbomolecular pumping mechanism.
6. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 5, wherein the plurality of rotor blades are fixed to respective radially spaced annular rings provided with the rotor blades of the turbomolecular pumping mechanism.
7. (currently amended) The ~~A~~ vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ 1, wherein the ~~or each~~ rotor of the molecular drag pumping mechanism has

associated therewith two parallel pumping paths comprising a pumping path radially inwardly of the ~~or each~~ rotor and a pumping path radially outwardly of the ~~or each~~ rotor.

8. (currently amended) ~~The~~A vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ 1, wherein the molecular drag pumping mechanism is of a holweck type.

9. (currently amended) ~~The~~A vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ 1, further comprising a second molecular drag pumping mechanism the rotor of which is supported by the rotor of a regenerative pumping exhausting mechanism.

10. (currently amended) ~~The~~A vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the rotor of the ~~or each~~ molecular drag pumping mechanism is made from a carbon fibre fiber composite material.

11. (currently amended) ~~The~~A vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ 1, wherein the rotor blades of the turbomolecular pumping mechanism are made from ~~aluminium~~ aluminum.

12. (currently amended) ~~The~~A vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 2, wherein the annular ring is made from ~~aluminium~~ aluminum.

13. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 2, wherein the rotor of the molecular drag pumping mechanism is supported approximately half way along the radial length of the rotor blades of the turbomolecular pumping mechanism.

14. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed claim 2, wherein the rotor of the molecular drag pumping mechanism has associated therewith two parallel pumping paths comprising a pumping path radially inward of the rotor and a pumping path radially outward of the rotor.

15. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 2, wherein the molecular drag pumping mechanism is of a holweck type.

16. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 7, wherein the molecular drag pumping mechanism is of a holweck type.

17. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 2, further comprising a second molecular drag pumping mechanism the rotor of which is supported by the rotor of a regenerative pumping exhausting mechanism.

18. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 5, further comprising a second molecular drag pumping mechanism the rotor of which is supported by the rotor of a regenerative pumping exhausting mechanism.

19. (new) The vacuum pumping arrangement as claimed in claim 8, further comprising a second molecular drag pumping mechanism the rotor of which is supported by the rotor of a regenerative pumping exhausting mechanism.